Colloquium Brief Strategic Studies Institute

U.S. Army War College,
> **U.S. Southern Command, and the**
>> **Latin American and Caribbean Center of**
>> **Florida International University** LACC

THE CHALLENGE OF GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY

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Key Points and Recommendation.

- A contemporary assessment of Latin American and Caribbean security must address a comprehensive, all-inclusive threat environment and consider the utility of all instruments of state power.

- Significant threats to individual and collective security, within the context of stability, development, democracy, peace, and effective sovereignty seriously diminish overall Latin American and Caribbean security.

- Dealing with threats in such an interrelated and interdependent context requires "good governance," an imperative that must be taken seriously and operationalized.

The Latin American and Caribbean Center of Florida International University, the U.S. Southern Command, and the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College held the ninth in a series of major annual conferences dealing with security and defense matters in the Western Hemisphere on February 1-3, 2006, in Miami, Florida. The conference, entitled "The Challenge of Governance and Security," brought together over 150 conferees who participated in a robust program of panels, question and answer sessions, and workshops. They exchanged perspectives and evaluated the contemporary hemispheric security situation. The dialogued amicably, with less tendency than in the past to either blame the United States for everything, or look to Washington to solve all of Latin America's problems. At the same time, civilian and military participants engaged in little "finger-pointing" and participants made no effort to keep police forces out of the dialogue. None viewed of the military as a menace, but rather as an important asset that had to be utilized effectively along with other instruments of national and international power to generate security, stability, development, democracy, and effective sovereignty. In this

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context, the conference dialogue centered on a broad and virtually all-inclusive internal threat environment, and the need for "good governance" to deal with a situation in which "everything is a part of everything else."

The All-Inclusive Internal Threat Environment.

The current threat environment in the Western Hemisphere is not a traditional security problem. While some traditional international boundary and territorial disputes remain alive, nontraditional subnational and transnational nonstate actors are actively involved in internal disruption and destabilization efforts that challenge the national security and effective sovereignty of virtually every nation-state in the region. The instability process tends to move from personal violence to increased collective violence and social disorder to kidnappings, bank robberies, violent property takeovers, murders/assassinations, personal and institutional corruption, criminal anarchy, and internal and external population displacements. In turn, the momentum of this process of violence tends to evolve into more widespread social violence, serious degradation of the economy, and less and less governmental capability to provide security and to guarantee the rule of law. Then, using complicity, intimidation, corruption, and indifference, an unprincipled actor or nonstate group can quietly and subtly co-opt politicians, bureaucrats, and security personnel to gain political control of a given piece of the national territory. The individual or nonstate group that takes control of a series of networked pieces of such "ungoverned territory" could then become a dominant political actor within a state or group of states.

These kinds of actions are not necessarily direct attacks on a government. They are, however, proven means for weakening governing regimes. These threats to stability, security, and state sovereignty reflect a logical progression from the problems of institutional and state weaknesses. It moves the threat spectrum from traditional state to nontraditional nonstate actors. In turn, that logical progression infers that several small and weak states in the Caribbean and Latin America are at serious risk of failure to perform their sovereign governance and security functions.

Linking Security, Stability, Development, Democracy, and Sovereignty.

An elaboration on the insecurity process that leads to state failure involves the circular nature of the interdependent relationships among security, stability and development, peace and democracy, and effective sovereignty. It begins with the provision of personal security to individual members of the citizenry. It then extends to protection of the collectivity from violent internal nonstate actors (including organized criminals, self-appointed reformers, vigilante groups), and external enemies. Additionally, security depends on the continued and expanded building of a country's socio-economic infrastructure (that is the basis of well-being and stability). Then, in the context of socio-economic development, facilitated by the establishment and maintenance of legitimate law and order (political development), a governing regime can begin to develop sustainable stability, peace, and prosperity. In this connection, the inherent stability of responsible democracy and concomitant political legitimacy are based on the moral right of a government to govern, and the ability of the regime to govern morally. Finally, the insecurity problem ends with the establishment of firm but fair control of the entire national territory and the people in it, which takes us to the concept of sovereignty. That is, without complete control of the national territory, a government cannot provide protection against violence, or sustain an effective judicial system, rule of law, long-term development, responsible democratic processes, or a lasting peace.

The Critical Need for Good Governance.

Given the interrelated, multidimensional, and circular nature of the contemporary threat situation, conference participants understood that two issues are key to effective security and stability. First, security is too broad and too important to pass off to either the police or the military. Contemporary security and stability are nationstate problems, and must be addressed in a unified and legitimizing manner by ALL the instruments of state power. Second, the greatest strategic-level challenge the countries of the Western Hemisphere will face in that regard is to achieve balanced socio-economic development with freedom and justice. In these terms, legitimate (good) governance is necessary to generate

the institutional and societal competence and honesty to manage, coordinate, and sustain security, stability, and development effectively.

Thus, the unaddressed question is, "How can governing institutions related to social welfare on one hand, and to the judiciary, police, and military, on the other, be strengthened?" The corollary is, "What are the most effective ways and means of using limited resources to assist in strengthening the state?" The immediacy of this set of problems was demonstrated by conference participants' repeated articulation of the fact that unless and until a population feels that its government deals with issues of personal security and development fairly and effectively, the potential for internal and/or external forces to destabilize and subvert that government is considerable.

Conclusions.

The conference dialogue stressed three things. First, participants were almost unanimous in their agreement regarding the necessity of governments providing individual and collective security and stability. In these terms, civilian and military officials are beginning to understand that an aggressor may not necessarily be a recognizable traditional military entity. The enemy is now the subnational and transnational nonstate actor that plans and implements the kind of violence and instability that subverts national and regional well-being and exploits the root causes of instability for his own narrow ideological and/or commercial (money-making) purposes.

Second, participants clearly understood that the majority of Latin American citizens hold a low opinion of their governments and leaders. They are not convinced that governments and institutions are working toward the general welfare. Additionally, it is clear that judicial systems are slow and unfair, legislatures operate erratically and mostly in their own interests, and political parties are weaker and less representative than ever. Thus, only a few countries—most notably Chile—have made progress toward achieving the aspirations of the security-stability-development-democracy, peace-prosperity model, and the related needs and desires of the populace.

Third, despite the generally positive tone of the conference, and general agreement on the threat, no consensus emerged regarding the ways and means

required to reverse the current debilitating instability and insecurity. As it stands now, a few—but not all—of the Central American countries have recently signed a regional security agreement to help combat transnational gangs, drugs and arms trafficking, and more sophisticated organized crime. But that does not constitute any significant movement toward a solution to the strategic-level challenge of governance and security.

Recommendation.

The security situation in the Western Hemisphere is extremely volatile and dangerous. It is time for the sovereign nations of the region to address the challenges of good governance and security seriously. Otherwise, the issue will likely resolve itself—and not in a manner to anyone's liking.

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